

III.12 AGRICULTURAL LAND AND PRODUCTION

The Bureau of Land Management (BLM) lands do not have agricultural production as a land use, except for livestock grazing (see Chapter III.16). Therefore, this analysis applies to lands within or outside of the LUPA Decision Area where future transmission associated with renewable energy developed in the DRECP may be developed or where indirect effects from activities on BLM land may occur.

This chapter presents the regulatory setting that guides the various types of farmland within the DRECP area.

III.12.1 Regulatory Setting

III.12.1.1 Federal

III.12.1.1.1 Federal Land Policy and Management Act of 1976

The BLM regulates agricultural uses on public lands under its jurisdiction under the authority of Title III of the Federal Land Policy and Management Act (FLPMA). Agricultural leases are managed as land use authorizations under the BLM Lands and Realty Program (see Chapter III.13). Where these agricultural leases are authorized, only livestock grazing is allowed on BLM-managed public lands; other types of agriculture are prohibited.

III.12.1.1.2 Farmland Protection Policy Act

The Farmland Protection Policy Act (FPPA) of 1981 (Sections 1539-1549 [PL 97-98], Dec 22 1981) directs the Secretary of Agriculture to establish and carry out a program to:

Minimize the extent to which federal programs contribute to the unnecessary and irreversible conversion of farmland to nonagricultural uses, and to the extent practicable, will be compatible with state, unit of local government, and private programs and policies to protect farmland (7 United States Code [U.S.C.] 4201-4209 and 7 USC 658).

The U.S. Department of Agriculture's (USDA) Natural Resources Conservation Service (NRCS) oversees the FPPA. FPPA categorizes farmland as Prime Farmland, Unique Farmland, and Land of Statewide or Local Importance. Farmland subject to FPPA requirements can include forestland, pastureland, cropland, or other types of land; only water or urban developed and built-up lands are excluded.

Projects are subject to FPPA requirements if they may irreversibly convert farmland, either directly or indirectly, to nonagricultural uses and are completed by or with the assistance of a federal agency. Federal permitting and licensing activities are not subject to FPPA.

III.12.1.2 State

The California Land Conservation Act of 1965 (Williamson Act)

The California Land Conservation Act of 1965, better known as the Williamson Act (California Administrative Code Section 51200 et seq.), allows private landowners to contract with counties and cities to voluntarily restrict land to agricultural and open space uses. In return, restricted parcels are assessed for property tax purposes at a rate consistent with their actual use, rather than potential market value, which in turn saves landowners 20% to 75% in property tax obligations each year. The Williamson Act is intended to preserve agricultural land and encourage open space, preservation, and efficient urban growth. Contracts issued under the Williamson Act automatically renew each year under 10-year period contracts unless the landowner files a notice of nonrenewal to terminate the contract at the end of the current 10-year period. During the 9-year nonrenewal period, property taxes are gradually raised year-by-year to their original amount.

Before 2009, counties received “subvention” (or subsidy) payments from the State to offset the property taxes lost through Williamson Act enrollment. In 2011, California passed AB 1265, which allows eligible counties to recapture 10% of the property tax benefits provided to owners of Williamson Act lands. If counties receive less than half of their foregone general fund property tax revenue from the Open Space Subvention Act program the prior year, they are eligible to implement a new provision of the Williamson Act (contained in AB 1265) that allows contracts (both Williamson Act and Farmland Security Zone) to be amended from 10 and 20 years to 9 and 18 years, respectively. Shortening the length of owners’ contracts triggers a statutorily authorized recapture of 10% of their participating landowners’ property tax savings. Since the increased revenue is allocated exclusively to the counties, they would recapture, on average, half of their foregone property tax revenue.

In 2009, these subvention payments were eliminated. In response to the loss of subvention funds from the state, the Imperial County Board of Supervisors decided to stop renewing Williamson Act contracts in 2012. With less than 2% of the county in private ownership, Inyo County does not participate in the Williamson Act program. The remaining counties in the DRECP area are still enrolling and renewing Williamson Act contracts.

III.12.1.2.1 Farmland Security Zones (1998)

In August 1998, the Williamson Act's Farmland Security Zone provisions were enacted with the passage of SB 1182 (Costa, Chapter 353, Statutes of 1998). This subprogram, dubbed the "Super Williamson Act," enables agricultural landowners to enter into contracts with counties in 20-year increments, with an additional 35% tax benefit over and above the standard Williamson Act contract savings. This program could potentially become an alternative to the Williamson Act; it does, however, depend on nonguaranteed state funding, which is uncertain at this time.

III.12.1.2.2 SB 618, as Amended, Wolk (February 18, 2011)

SB 618 authorizes parties to a Williamson Act contract to rescind the contract in order to enter into a solar-use easement, requiring land use for solar photovoltaic (PV) facilities for at least 10 years. To be eligible for conversion to a solar-use easement, agricultural land must be marginal and impaired (defined as nonprofitable under commercial agriculture due to lack of water, erosion, or contamination). This bill would require a county or city to include certain restrictions, conditions, or covenants in their deeds or instrument-granting documents for a solar-use easement. Under SB 618, a solar-use easement would automatically renew annually, unless either party filed a notice of nonrenewal. Either party must file a notice of nonrenewal to terminate a solar-use easement. SB 618 would also require that if the landowner terminates the solar-use easement, the landowner shall restore the property to the conditions that existed before the easement termination date. If the easement is violated, specified parties may bring an action to enforce the easement. Under SB 618, construction of solar PV facilities on land subject to a solar-use easement would qualify as an active solar energy system, which, as defined, would be excluded from a new construction tax classification.

III.12.1.2.3 California Department of Conservation, Division of Land Resource Protection's Farmland Mapping and Monitoring Program

The goal of the Farmland Mapping and Monitoring Program (FMMP) is to provide consistent and impartial data to decision makers so they can accurately assess present status, review trends, and plan for the future of California's agricultural land resources. FMMP produces Important Farmland Maps, which are a hybrid of resource quality (soils) and land use information. Agricultural lands are rated according to soil quality and irrigation status. Important Farmland Maps are updated every two years, based on aerial photograph review, computer mapping analysis, public input, and field reconnaissance. According to the Important Farmland Inventory Map, the DRECP area includes farmland classifications such as: Prime Farmland, Farmland of Statewide Importance, Unique Farmland, Farmland of Local Importance, Grazing Land, and Other Land. Table III.12-1 shows the acreage totals for all farmland categories, by county, within the DRECP area. Important Farmland within the larger LUPA Decision Area is shown on Figure III.12-2.

Table III.12-1
Acres of FMMP Farmland Within the DRECP Area—By County*

Category	Imperial	Inyo	Kern	Los Angeles	Riverside	San Bernardino	San Diego	Total Acres
Prime Farmland	194,000		10,000	28,000	56,000	5,000	100	293,000
Farmland of Statewide Importance	307,000		2,000	800	34,000	5,000	3,000	352,000
Unique Farmland	2,000		2,000	500	1,000	800	300	7,000
Farmland of Local Importance	36,000			6,000	39,000	30	800	82,000
<i>Important Farmland Subtotal</i>	<i>539,000</i>		<i>13,000</i>				<i>4,000</i>	<i>734,000</i>
Grazing Land			337,000	104,000		823,000		1,264,000
Urban and Built-Up Land	28,000		26,000	53,000	5,000	84,000	2,000	198,000
Other Land	460,000		200	486,000	18,000	210,000	76,000	1,250,000
Semi-Agricultural and Rural Commercial Land			1,000					1,000
Nonagricultural and Natural Vegetation		10	1,280,000	30		200		1,280,000
Water	800			300	1,000	400		3,000
Not Mapped	1,747,000	2,988,000	400	600	1,993,000	10,855,000	185,000	17,768,000
Vacant or Disturbed Land			71,000					71,000
Rural Residential			17,000			10		17,000
Total (All Land)	2,775,000	2,988,000	1,746,000	680,000	2,148,000	11,983,000	268,000	22,587,000

* Not including Inyo County data; except Imperial County, includes only part of counties. Source California Department of Conservation data from 2010

Note: The following general rounding rules were applied to calculated values: values greater than 1,000 were rounded to the nearest 1,000; values less than 1,000 and greater than 100 were rounded to the nearest 100; values of 100 or less were rounded to the nearest 10, and therefore totals may not sum due to rounding. In cases where subtotals are provided, the subtotals and the totals are individually rounded. The totals are not a sum of the rounded subtotals; therefore the subtotals may not sum to the total within the table.

Table III.12-2
Acres of FMMP Farmland Within the DRECP Area—By Ownership*

Category	Federal	Local Cities & Counties	Un- specified	Non- Profit	University of Calif	Santa Monica Conservancy	Special District	State	Tribal Lands	Total Acres
Prime Farmland	8,000	6,000	263,000	—	—	—		2,000	15,000	293,000
Farmland of Statewide Importance	4,000	4,000	344,000	—	—	—	—	900	—	352,000
Unique Farmland	500	200	6,000	—	—	—	—	10	600	7,000
Farmland of Local Importance	21,000	3,000	57,000	—	—	—		300	800	82,000
<i>Important Farmland Subtotal</i>	<i>33,000</i>	<i>13,000</i>	<i>669,000</i>				<i>10</i>	<i>3,000</i>	<i>17,000</i>	<i>734,000</i>
Grazing Land	283,000	2,000	969,000	—	—	200	100	11,000	200	1,264,000
Urban and Built-Up Land	10,000	2,000	186,000	—	—	—	200	70	400	198,000
Other Land	454,000	10,000	738,000	1,000		300	10	42,000	5,000	1,250,000
Semi-Agricultural and Rural Commercial Land	100		1,000	—	—	—	—	—	—	1,000
Nonagricultural and Natural Vegetation	800,000	300	453,000	40	—	—		27,000	40	1,280,000
Water	500	200	2,000	—	—	—		400		3,000
Not Mapped	15,440,000	299,000	1,305,000	27,000	2,000	—	90	586,000	111,000	17,768,000
Vacant or Disturbed Land	9,000	300	61,000	—	—	—	—	400	—	71,000
Rural Residential	200	30	17,000	—	—	—	—	—	—	17,000
Total (All Land)	17,030,000	326,000	4,400,000	28,000	2,000	400	400	669,000	133,000	22,587,000

* Not including Inyo County data; source California Department of Conservation data from 2010

Note: The following general rounding rules were applied to calculated values: values greater than 1,000 were rounded to the nearest 1,000; values less than 1,000 and greater than 100 were rounded to the nearest 100; values of 100 or less were rounded to the nearest 10, and therefore totals may not sum due to rounding. In cases where subtotals are provided, the subtotals and the totals are individually rounded. The totals are not a sum of the rounded subtotals; therefore the subtotals may not sum to the total within the table.

The following describes the Important Farmland Map categories identified in Table III.12-1 and III.12-2.

- **Prime Farmland** has the most favorable combination of physical and chemical features, enabling it to sustain long-term production of agricultural crops. This land possesses the soil quality, growing season, and moisture supply needed to produce sustained high yields. To qualify for this classification, the land must have produced irrigated crops at some point during the two update cycles prior to NRCS mapping. Approximately 292,980 acres of Prime Farmland exist within the DRECP area.
- **Farmland of Statewide Importance** is similar to Prime Farmland; however, it possesses minor shortcomings such as greater slopes or less ability to store moisture. To qualify for this classification, the land must have produced irrigated crops at some point during the two update cycles prior to NRCS mapping. Approximately 351,805 acres exist within the DRECP area.
- **Unique Farmland** has lesser-quality soils for the production of the state's leading agricultural crops. Unique Farmland includes areas that do not meet the above-stated criteria for Prime Farmland or Farmland of Statewide Importance, but that have been used for the production of specific high economic-value crops during the two update cycles prior to the mapping date. It has the special combination of soil quality, location, growing season, and moisture supply needed to produce sustained high quality or high yields of a specific crop when treated and managed according to current farming methods. This land is usually irrigated, but may include nonirrigated orchards or vineyards as found in some climatic zones in California. Land must have been used for crops at some time during the 4 years prior to the mapping date. Approximately 6,773 acres exist within the DRECP area.
- **Farmland of Local Importance** is important to the local agricultural economy, as determined by the local county boards of supervisors and local advisory committees. The County of San Diego defines Farmland of Local Importance as land with the same characteristics as Prime Farmland or Farmland of Statewide Importance, with the exception of irrigation. Approximately 82,196 acres exist within the DRECP area.
- **Grazing Land** is land on which the existing vegetation is suited to livestock grazing. This category was developed in cooperation with the California Cattlemen's Association, University of California Cooperative Extension, and other groups interested in grazing activities. The minimum mapping unit for Grazing Land is 40 acres. Approximately 1,264,467 acres exist within the DRECP area.
- **Urban and Built-Up Land** consists of land occupied by structures with a building density of at least 1 unit to 1.5 acres, or approximately 6 structures to a 10-acre

parcel. This land is used for residential, industrial, commercial, construction, institutional, public administration, railroad yards and other transportation facilities, cemeteries, airports, golf courses, sanitary landfills, sewage treatment facilities, water control structures, and other developed purposes. Approximately 198,367 acres exist within the DRECP area.

- **Other Land** consists of land not included in any other mapping category. Common examples include (1) low-density rural developments; (2) brush, timber, wetland, and riparian areas not suitable for livestock grazing; (3) confined livestock, poultry or aquaculture facilities; (4) strip mines and borrow pits; and (5) water bodies smaller than 40 acres. Vacant and nonagricultural land greater than 40 acres and surrounded on all sides by urban development is mapped as Other Land. Approximately 1,249,926 acres exist within the DRECP area.
- **Semi-Agricultural and Rural Commercial Land** consists of farmsteads, agricultural storage and packing sheds, unpaved parking areas, composting facilities, equine facilities, firewood lots, and campgrounds. Approximately 1,100 acres exist within the DRECP area.
- **Nonagricultural and Natural Vegetation** consists of heavily wooded, rocky or barren areas, riparian and wetland areas, grassland areas that do not qualify as grazing land due to their size or land management restrictions, small water bodies, and recreational water ski lakes. Constructed wetlands are also included in this category. Approximately 1,279,901 acres exist within the DRECP area.
- **Water** consists of perennial water bodies greater than 40 acres. Approximately 2,693 acres exist within the DRECP area.
- **Not Mapped** represents areas that have not been mapped by the FMMP; there are approximately 17,768,303 acres in the DRECP area.

III.12.1.3 Applicable Local Agricultural Lands Ordinances

III.12.1.3.1 Imperial County

The Imperial County General Plan Agricultural Element contains guidelines for the preservation of important farmland, development patterns and locations of agricultural land, prevention of conflicts between agricultural and nonagricultural uses, water availability and conservation, irrigation runoff and environmental issues, agricultural regulations, public relations and education, agricultural production and marketing research, agricultural packaging and processing operations, and special cattle, dairy, and aquaculture concerns (County of Imperial 1996).

The Imperial County Agriculture Element sets the following goals.

- **Goal 1:** All Important Farmland, as defined by federal and state agencies, should be reserved for agricultural uses.
- **Goal 3:** Limit the introduction of conflicting uses into farming areas.
- **Goal 4:** Maximize the inherent productivity of Imperial County's agricultural resources by ensuring future availability of adequate and affordable irrigation water.
- **Goal 11:** Encourage the continuation and expansion of agricultural production.

The Imperial County Agriculture Element identifies the following policies.

- **Policy 1 (Preservation of Important Farmland):** All agricultural land in Imperial County is considered Important Farmland, as defined by federal and state agencies, and should be reserved for agricultural uses. Agricultural land may be converted to nonagricultural uses only where a clear and immediate need can be demonstrated.
- **Policy 3 (Agricultural and Nonagricultural Land Use Relations):** Any new growth increases the potential for new conflicts with existing agricultural land uses. It is the policy of the County that the developer of nonagricultural land use bears the burden of preventing or mitigating agricultural or nonagricultural land use conflicts.

The Imperial County Conservation and Open Space Element sets the following goals.

- **Goal 4:** The County will actively conserve and maintain contiguous farmlands and prime soil areas to maintain economic vitality and the unique lifestyle of the Imperial Valley.
- **Goal 6:** The County shall seek to achieve maximum conservation practices and maximum development of renewable alternative sources of energy.

III.12.1.3.1.1 County of Imperial Right to Farm Ordinance No. 1031

The purpose of the County of Imperial Right to Farm Ordinance No. 1031 is to reduce the loss of its agricultural resources by clarifying the circumstances under which agricultural operations can be considered to be a nuisance. The ordinance includes a requirement for disclosure of agricultural operations as part of real estate transactions in nearby agricultural operations (County of Imperial 1996).

III.12.1.3.2 Inyo County

III.12.1.3.2.1 General Plan

Inyo County is the second-largest county (by area) in California, and 91.6% of its land is controlled by various federal agencies. Additional land is held by the State of California (3.5%), Los Angeles Department of Water and Power (2.7%), and Inyo County (or other local agencies) and Indian reservation lands (0.3%). Only about 1.9% of the county's land area is private land and therefore explicitly subject to the guidance of the Inyo County General Plan (2001).

The following General Plan Land Use Element and Conservation and Open Space Element goals and policies pertain to agricultural resources.

- **Goal GOV-4.1/Federal Land Disposition:** Protect and enhance private property interests including, but not limited to, land patents, drilling rights, mining claims, easements, rights-of-way and forage rights.
- **Goal Land Use (LU)-5:** Provide adequate public facilities and services for the existing and/or future needs of communities and their surrounding environs and conserve natural and managed resources.
- **Policy LU-5.3 Agriculture Designation (A):** Provide for agricultural uses on land that is suited by soils and water resources to the production of food and fiber on a regular and sustained basis, limited agricultural support services, agriculturally oriented services, agricultural processing facilities, public and quasi-public uses, and certain compatible nonagricultural activities. Residential uses associated with agricultural use are allowed at a maximum density of 1 dwelling unit per 40 acres. The floor area ratio for nonresidential uses shall not exceed 0.10, except for agriculturally oriented services (e.g., stables, feed stores, silos), which shall not exceed 0.25.
- **Goal Public Services and Utilities (PSU)-10:** Provide efficient and cost-effective utilities that serve the existing and future needs of people in the unincorporated areas of the County.
- **Policy PSU-10.1 Expansion of Services:** Work with local electric utility companies to design and locate appropriate expansions to electricity facilities while minimizing impacts to agriculture and noise, electromagnetic fields, visual, and other impacts on current and future residents.
- **Policy PSU-10.2 Improvements:** Promote technological improvements and the upgrading of utility services in Inyo County.
- **Goal Soil (S)-1:** Maintain the productivity of Inyo County's soils.

- **Policy S-1.1 Soil Conservation for Agriculture:** Encourage the conservation of agricultural soils to provide a base for agricultural productivity and the county's economy.
- **Goal Agriculture (AG)-1:** Provide and maintain a viable and diverse agricultural industry in Inyo County.
- **Policy AG-1.1 Identify Important Agricultural Lands:** Support and encourage the identification of important agricultural lands in the County.
- **Policy AG-1.2 Continue Agricultural Production:** Support and encourage continued agricultural production activities in the County.
- **Policy AG-1.3 Conversion of Agricultural Land:** Discourage conversions of productive agricultural lands for urban development.
- **Policy AG-1.4 Minimize Land Conflicts:** Preserve and protect agricultural lands from encroachment by incompatible land uses.
- **General Plan GOAL GOV-10 (Energy Resources) and Policy Gov-10.1 (Development)** indicate that development of energy resources on both public and private lands be encouraged with the policies of the County to develop these energy resources within the bounds of economic reason and sound environmental health.

III.12.1.3.2.2 Title 18 Zoning, Chapter 18.12 Open Space Zone

The intent of Chapter 18.12, Open Space Zone, is to establish standards for land uses that will protect and preserve environmental resources, scenic and natural features, and the open-space character of the County, while providing for appropriate agricultural development and the protection of existing agricultural areas from urban development or residential subdivision (18.12.010).

III.12.1.3.2.3 Title 21 Renewable Energy Development

Inyo County Code policies encourage renewable energy facilities. Measures mandated by code govern the siting, permitting, licensing, and construction of renewable energy facilities.

III.12.1.3.3 Kern County

III.12.1.3.3.1 General Plan

As stated in its General Plan, agriculture has been and will continue to be vital to the Kern County economy. Kern County's agricultural production has greatly increased with development of major water projects over the past two decades. Nonetheless, as in other

counties, Kern County's agricultural land is threatened by subdivision, urbanization, and the rising cost of land.

Agriculture, mineral and petroleum production, and local government are the basic industries in the county. The goals of the General Plan's Land Use, Open Space, and Conservation Element include directing new urban development to areas that will not conflict with petroleum extraction, agriculture, rangeland, or mineral resources. The following goals, policies, and implementation measures focus on agriculture and renewable energy.

- **Resource Goal 2:** Protect areas of important mineral, petroleum, and agricultural resource potential for future use.
- **Resource Goal 3:** Ensure that the development of resource areas minimally impact neighboring resource lands.
- **Resource Goal 4:** Encourage safe and orderly energy development within the County, including research and demonstration projects, and become actively involved in the decision and actions of other agencies as they affect energy development in Kern County.
- **Resource Goal 5:** Conserve prime agriculture lands from premature conversion to nonagricultural uses.
- **Resource Goal 6:** Encourage alternative sources of energy, such as solar and wind energy, while protecting the environment.
- **Resource Policy 7:** Areas designated for agricultural use, which include Class I and II and other enhanced agricultural soils with surface-water delivery systems, should be protected from incompatible residential, commercial, and industrial subdivision and development.
- **Resources Policy 9:** When evaluating General Plan amendment proposals to change an Intensive Agriculture designation, the County shall consider the level of interference with surrounding agricultural operations, the public services available, demonstrated need for a project, soil suitability for agriculture, and other contiguous nonagricultural uses.
- **Resource Policy 12:** Areas identified by the NRCS that possess high range-site value should be conserved either for Extensive Agriculture uses or as a Resource Reserve.
- **Resource Policy 15:** Agriculture and other resource uses will be considered as consistent uses in areas reserved for Mineral and Petroleum Resource use in the General Plan.

- **Resource Policy 16:** The County will encourage development of alternative energy sources by tailoring its zoning and subdivision ordinances and building standards to reflect alternative energy guidelines published by the California Energy Commission (CEC).
- **Resource Implementation Measure I:** Periodically review the County's Zoning Ordinance to reflect new technology and energy sources and encourage these types of uses for new development.

III.12.1.3.3.2 Municipal Code Chapter 19.12—Exclusive Agriculture District

Activities in the Exclusive Agriculture District are limited primarily to agriculture and other uses compatible with agriculture. Kern County considers utility and communications facilities, resource extraction, and energy development to be compatible activities within agricultural districts. Utility and communications facilities include transmission lines and supporting towers, poles, utility substations, and underground facilities for gas, water, electricity, telephone, or telegraph service. The resource extraction and energy development uses compatible with agricultural districts include permitted solar energy generators that occupy no more than one acre and small wind energy systems that meet specific criteria.

III.12.1.3.3.3 Municipal Code Chapter 19.14—Limited Agriculture District

The purpose of the Limited Agriculture District is to designate areas suitable for a combination of residential development, agricultural, and other compatible uses. Among the compatible uses are utility and communications facilities, resource extraction, and energy development uses. These uses are similar to those in the Exclusive Agriculture District, with the exception of utility substations and wind-driven electrical generators.

III.12.1.3.4 Los Angeles County

III.12.1.3.4.1 General Plan

Much of Los Angeles County has already been developed. The Los Angeles County General Plan Conservation and Natural Resources Element, Agricultural Resources section, includes policies intended to preserve the county's remaining agricultural lands. The northern portion of the county contains most of the county's agricultural land and is also experiencing the most rapid population growth. The Agricultural Resources goals and policies provide direction for both private development and government actions and programs.

Agricultural Resource Areas consist of historically farmed areas in the county, as well as farmland identified by the California Department of Conservation. These include Prime

Farmland, Farmland of Statewide Importance, Unique Farmland, and Farmland of Local Importance. The Agricultural Resource Area policies specifically include renewable energy facilities as incompatible with agriculture. The following policies focus on the protection of Agricultural Resource Areas.

- **Policy C/NR 8.1:** Protect Agricultural Resource Areas, and other lands identified as Prime Farmland, Farmland of Statewide Importance, Unique Farmland, and Farmland of Local Importance by the California Department of Conservation, from encroaching development and incompatible adjacent land uses.
- **Policy C/NR 8.2:** Discourage land uses in Agricultural Resource Areas and other lands identified as Prime Farmland, Farmland of Statewide Importance, Unique Farmland, and Farmland of Local Importance by the California Department of Conservation that are incompatible with agricultural activities.
- **Policy C/NR 8.3:** Encourage agricultural activities within the Agricultural Resource Areas.

III.12.1.3.4.2 Title 22 Planning and Zoning

The agricultural zones permit a comprehensive range of agricultural use in suitable areas. Permitted uses encourage agricultural pursuits and other uses that are either required for or desired by residents. Agricultural zones include both light and heavy agricultural, including hog ranches. Permitted noncommercial wind energy conversion systems are allowed in light agricultural zones (22.24.100[B]). Electric distribution substations, electric transmission substations, generating plants, and noncommercial wind energy conversion systems require permits in heavy agricultural zones, including for hog ranches (Section 22.24.150 [A],[B]).

III.12.1.3.5 Riverside County

III.12.1.3.5.1 General Plan

The General Plan states that the county's "widespread and diverse agriculture lands" are key to the county's historic character and economic strength. Agriculture is one of the dominant industries in the county's economy, and agricultural lands provide important buffers between developed areas.

The Agriculture land use designation was established to help conserve productive agricultural lands within the county, including row crops, nurseries, citrus groves and vineyards, dairies, ranches, poultry, and hog farms. Areas designated for agriculture generally lack the needed infrastructure for urban development. The General Plan states

that “new uses encroaching upon existing agricultural operations shall provide some type of buffering to mitigate any compatibility issues” (Riverside County General Plan 2003).

The following General Plan policies are relevant to agriculture.

- **LU 16.1:** Encourage retaining agriculturally designated lands where agricultural activity can be sustained at an operational scale, where it accommodates lifestyle choice, and in locations where impacts to and from potentially incompatible uses, such as residential uses, are minimized through incentives such as tax credits.
- **LU 16.2:** Protect agricultural uses, including those with industrial characteristics (dairies, poultry, hog farms, etc.) by discouraging inappropriate land division in the immediate proximity and allowing only uses and intensities that are compatible with agricultural uses (AI 3).
- **LU 16.4:** Encourage conservation of productive agricultural lands. Preserve prime agricultural lands for high-value crop production.
- **LU 16.5:** Continue to participate in The California Land Conservation Act (the Williamson Act) of 1965.
- **LU 16.6:** Require consideration of state agricultural land classification specifications when a 2½-year Agriculture Foundation amendment to the General Plan is reviewed that would result in a shift from an agricultural to a nonagricultural use (AI 8).
- **LU 16.7:** Adhere to Riverside County’s Right to Farm Ordinance.

Riverside County’s Agriculture land use designation does not permit renewable energy development. The Rural Desert land use designation, however, does allow for both limited agriculture and renewable energy uses including solar, geothermal, and wind energy. It also allows the associated uses required to develop and operate renewable energy sources, but as appropriate within remote desert areas with limited access, water, and other services. This is important because, as discussed in Section 3.9 of the Riverside County General Plan (2003), the DRECP area includes a majority of Eastern Riverside County. When combined with Open Space, lands designated Agriculture, Rural, and Rural Community make up more than 98% of Eastern Riverside County.

Other Riverside County agricultural land use designations are within the Rural Community Foundation Component. These rural communities have limited infrastructure and many residents keep farm animals. Agriculture is permitted in these areas. The county recognizes the major challenges inherent in maintaining both rural character and adequate buffers between agriculture and other, incompatible uses. The Estate Density Residential, Very

Low-Density Residential, and Low-Density Residential land use designations permit agricultural activities.

III.12.1.3.5.2 Zoning

Agricultural zones include light agriculture, light agriculture with poultry, heavy agriculture, agriculture–dairy, and citrus/vineyard. The intent of the agriculture–dairy zone is to preserve dairy operations and their economic importance to the county. This zone protects dairies from urban encroachment and encourages dairies to locate in established rural and agricultural areas to minimize impacts to urbanizing communities. Permitted public utility facilities are allowed in light agriculture, light agriculture with poultry, heavy agriculture, and citrus/vineyard zones (Chapters 17.120, 17.124, 17.128, and 17.136). The agriculture–dairy zone does not allow public utility facilities (Chapter 17.132).

III.12.1.3.6 San Bernardino County

III.12.1.3.6.1 General Plan

Land Use Element

The San Bernardino County Agriculture Land Use Zoning District is intended to preserve the county’s agricultural economy and protect agricultural open space. It includes commercial agricultural operations, agriculture support services, rural residential uses, and similar compatible uses. Open space and recreation uses are compatible with nonfarmed lands within this district (San Bernardino County 2007).

Conservation Element

Agriculture has historically been an important part of San Bernardino’s economy. The county consistently ranks in the top 15 agricultural counties in the state. The stated purpose of the Agriculture Land Use Zoning District is to (1) recognize commercial agriculture as a desirable land use type and a major segment of the county’s economic base, (2) identify areas where agriculture is the primary land use but where other secondary uses that directly support agriculture may be permitted, (3) preserve the agricultural base of the county’s economy and encourage the open-space values of these uses, (4) provide areas for both intensive and extensive agricultural pursuits, and (5) identify areas of commercial (prime and nonprime) agricultural soils and operations. Areas designated for agriculture generally have limited infrastructure and are located in areas where parcel sizes and ownership patterns are large enough to accommodate agricultural operations and provide buffers from nearby incompatible land uses. The Soils/Agriculture component

of Section V—Conservation Element contains a goal (Goal CO 6) requiring that the county balance the productivity and conservation of soil resources.

The following policies, which apply to properties designated as Agriculture in the General Plan and on land use maps, support Goal CO 6 and may be relevant to the DRECP.

- **CO 6.1:** Protect prime agricultural lands from the adverse effects of urban encroachment, particularly increased erosion and sedimentation, trespass, and nonagricultural land development.
- **CO 6.2:** The County will allow the development of areas of prime agricultural lands supporting commercially valuable agriculture to urban intensity when it can be demonstrated that no long-term viability of the agricultural uses—due to encroaching urbanization—create incompatible land uses in close proximity to each other.
- **CO 6.3:** Preservation of prime and statewide important soils types, as well as areas exhibiting viable agricultural operations, will be considered an integral portion of the Open Space Element when considering development proposals.
- **CO 6.4:** Provide and maintain a viable and diverse agricultural industry in San Bernardino County.

III.12.1.3.6.2 Title 8 Development Code

The agriculture land use zoning districts provide sites for commercial agricultural operations, agriculture support services, rural residential uses, and similar and compatible uses. Open-space and recreation uses may occur on nonfarmed lands within this agriculture zoning district (Section 82.01.020). Transmission lines and control stations are allowed. Solar and wind electrical generation is allowed with a conditional use permit. The development standards are contained in Sections 84.29.030 and 84.29.040 of the Development Code for wind and solar, respectively. Wind energy support systems are allowed with specific-use permits. (Section 82.03).

III.12.1.3.7 San Diego County

The San Diego General Plan's Conservation and Open Space Element and Land Use Element each address agricultural resources. The Conservation and Open Space Element includes the following relevant goals and policies.

- **Goal COS-6: Sustainable Agricultural Industry.** Viable and long-term agricultural industry and sustainable agricultural land uses in San Diego County will serve as beneficial resources and contributors to the County's rural character and open space.

- **Goal COS-6.2: Protection of Agricultural Operations.** Protect existing agricultural operations from the encroachment of incompatible land uses. Require developers to minimize potential conflicts with adjacent agricultural operations by incorporating adequate buffers, setbacks, and project design measures to protect surrounding agriculture.

The San Diego County Land Use Element includes the following relevant goals and policies.

- **Policy LU-5.3: Rural Land Preservation.** Ensure the preservation of existing open space and rural areas (e.g., forested areas, agricultural lands, wildlife habitat and corridors, wetlands, watersheds, and groundwater recharge areas) when permitting development under the Rural and Semi Rural Land Use designations.
- **Goal LU-7: Agricultural Conservation.** Develop land use plans that retain and protect farming and agriculture as beneficial resources that contribute to the County's rural character.
- **Goal LU-10: Function of Semi-Rural and Rural Lands.** Semi-Rural and Rural Lands should buffer communities, protect natural resources, promote agriculture, and accommodate unique rural communities.

III.12.1.3.7.1 Zoning Ordinance Section 2700 – 2709

Limited Agricultural Use regulations are intended to create and preserve areas primarily used for agricultural crop production, with a limited number of small farm animals. General Agricultural Use regulations are intended to create and preserve areas for raising crops and animals. Renewable energy development is not permitted in these two agricultural zones.

III.12.2 Agricultural Land Within the DRECP Area by Ecoregion Subarea

III.12.2.1 Williamson Act Lands

Lands covered under the Williamson Act are classified as either prime or nonprime. These categories exist primarily for determining subvention payment amounts. Nonprime land, which typically consists of grazing and rangeland, is also categorized as Open Space of Statewide Significance. Williamson Act land contract terms are typically for 10 years. Some jurisdictions exercise the option to extend the terms for as long as 20 years. Contracts renew automatically every year unless a 9-year nonrenewal process is initiated. Either the local government or a landowner can initiate the nonrenewal process. During the nonrenewal process, the annual tax assessment gradually increases. At the end of the 9-year nonrenewal period, the contract is terminated (DOC2012).

Table III.12-3 shows Williamson Act lands within the DRECP area. Williamson Act lands within the larger LUPA Decision Area are shown in Figure III.12-1.

**Table III.12-3
Williamson Act Lands Within the DRECP Area**

Category	Acres
Mixed–Nonrenewal	500
Nonprime	52,000
Nonprime–Nonrenewal	2,000
Prime	24,000
Prime–Nonrenewal	2,000
Total	80,000

Source: California Department of Conservation (2004–2009), without data for Inyo, Los Angeles, or Imperial counties.

Note: The following general rounding rules were applied to calculated values: values greater than 1,000 were rounded to the nearest 1,000; values less than 1,000 and greater than 100 were rounded to the nearest 100; values of 100 or less were rounded to the nearest 10, and therefore totals may not sum due to rounding. In cases where subtotals are provided, the subtotals and the totals are individually rounded. The totals are not a sum of the rounded subtotals; therefore the subtotals may not sum to the total within the table.

As shown in Table III.12-3, the categories of Williamson Act lands within the DRECP area are as follows:

- **Mixed–Nonrenewal:** Mixed acreage parcels contain prime, nonprime, open-space easement, or other contracted or enrolled land; these parcels are not yet mapped.
- **Nonprime:** Nonprime land is enrolled under a California Land Conservation Act contract but does not meet any of the criteria for classification as prime agricultural land. Most nonprime land is in agricultural uses such as grazing or nonirrigated crops. However, nonprime land may also include other open-space uses that are compatible with agriculture and consistent with local General Plans.
- **Nonprime–Nonrenewal:** Nonprime land in the nonrenewal process.
- **Prime:** Land enrolled under California Land Conservation Act contract that meets any of the following criteria (California Government Code Section 51201).
 1. Land that qualifies as Class I or Class II in the NRCS land use capability classifications.
 2. Land that rates 80 to 100 in the Storie Index Rating. The Storie Index is a widely used method of rating soils for land use and productivity in California; higher values indicate greater suitability for agriculture.
 3. Land that supports livestock used for the production of food and fiber where there is at least one animal per acre, as defined by the U.S. Department of Agriculture.

4. Land planted with fruit or nut-bearing trees, vines, bushes or crops that have a nonbearing period of fewer than 5 years and will normally return annually during the commercial-bearing period from the production of unprocessed agricultural plant production (not less than two hundred dollars per acre).
 5. Land that has been returned from the production of unprocessed agricultural plant production and has an annual gross value of not less than two hundred dollars per acre for three of the previous 5 years.
- **Prime–Nonrenewal:** Land that is enrolled under California Land Conservation Act contract and meets the criteria for Prime Land (as described above), and is in the nonrenewal process.

III.12.2.2 Important Farmland

The California Department of Conservation, Division of Land Resource Protection, implements the FMMP and determines the suitability of land for agriculture. The FMMP was developed to inventory land and define categories of important farmlands, and to provide consistent and impartial data to decision makers to assess present status, review trends, and plan for the future of California's agricultural land.

Tables III.12-1 and III.12-2 show the approximate acreage for each of the FMMP categories within the DRECP area. A large portion (14,780,550 acres) of the eastern third of the DRECP area has not been mapped.

Important Farmland acreage is found within CDCA area lands, but outside the DRECP boundary. There are 1,057,872 total acres in the BLM Decision Area outside the DRECP boundary. The majority of this acreage is not mapped (see Section III.12.2.3.11). There is a total of 342 acres of Important Farmland on BLM lands outside of the DRECP boundary. As discussed in Section III.12.1.1, while agricultural lands are within DRECP, agricultural activities other than grazing are not allowed on BLM-administered lands; therefore the 342 acres (less than 0.01% of the total) are assumed to be mapping errors.

III.12.2.3 Agricultural Land by DRECP Ecoregion Subarea

III.12.2.3.1 Cadiz Valley and Chocolate Mountains Ecoregion Subarea

The Cadiz Valley and Chocolate Mountains ecoregion subarea contains Williamson Act lands as well as FMMP Farmland (Important Farmland) identified in Table III.12-4.

The baseline includes more than 50 renewable energy projects either recently completed or under construction within the DRECP area. These projects are listed by county in Appendix O, and shown in Figure III.1-2a and Figure III.1-2b (Chapter III.1, Section

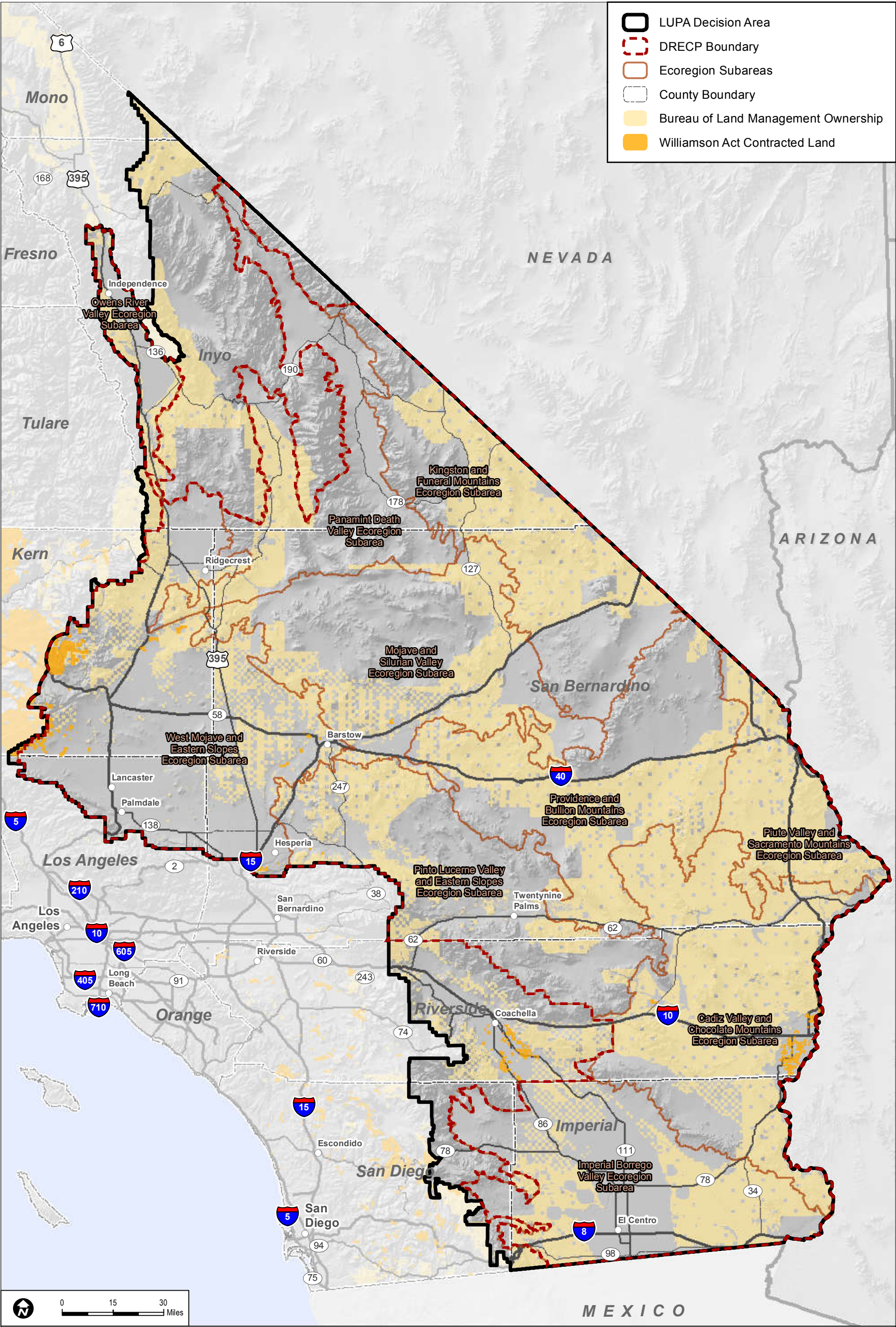
III.1.3.3). Agricultural resources were assessed in project locations. Of particular relevance to the Cadiz Valley and Chocolate Mountains baseline are the two Riverside County solar projects currently under construction on BLM-administered land: Genesis NextEra (1,950 acres), and Desert Sunlight Solar Farm (4,144 acres). As of December 2013, Genesis Phase I is operational and generating 125 MW of electricity. There is also a privately owned Solar PV project, FSE Blythe 1, on 200 acres. It is operational and generating 21 MW.

Table III.12-4
Acres of Williamson Act Lands and FMMP Farmland Within the
Cadiz Valley and Chocolate Mountains Ecoregion Subarea of the DRECP Area*

Category	Acres
Prime Farmland	61,000
Farmland of Statewide Importance	36,000
Unique Farmland	2,000
Farmland of Local Importance	41,000
Other Land	22,000
Urban and Built-Up Land	5,000
Water	1,000
Not Mapped	2,884,000
Total	3,053,000
Williamson Act Lands	20,000

* Not including Inyo County data; source California Department of Conservation data from 2010

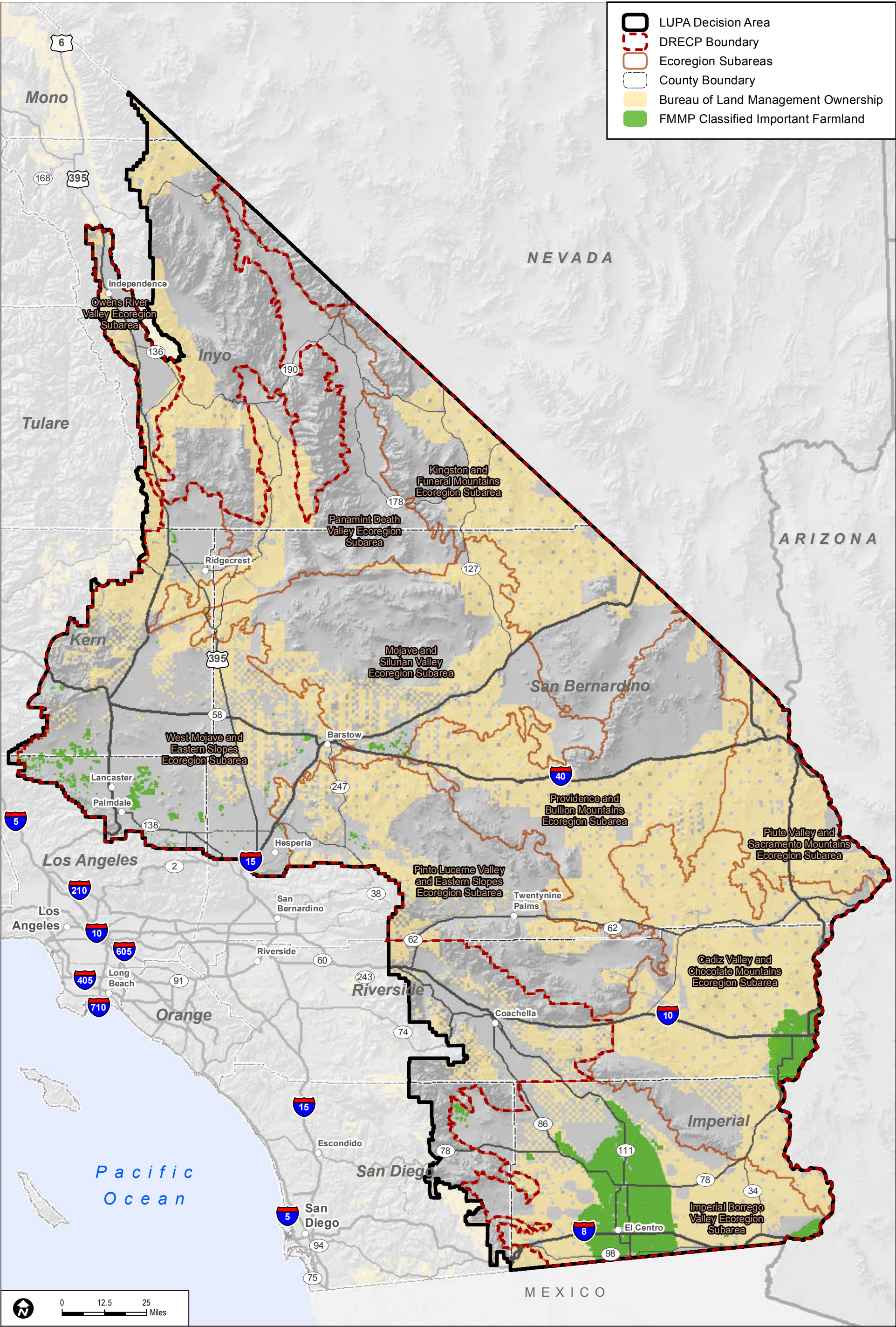
Note: The following general rounding rules were applied to calculated values: values greater than 1,000 were rounded to the nearest 1,000; values less than 1,000 and greater than 100 were rounded to the nearest 100; values of 100 or less were rounded to the nearest 10, and therefore totals may not sum due to rounding. In cases where subtotals are provided, the subtotals and the totals are individually rounded. The totals are not a sum of the rounded subtotals; therefore the subtotals may not sum to the total within the table.



Sources: ESRI (2014); BLM (2015); RECON (2015); California Department of Conservation (2012)

FIGURE III.12-1
Williamson Act Lands within the LUPA Decision Area

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Sources: ESRI (2014); BLM (2015); RECON (2015); California Department of Conservation, Division of Land Resource Protection, Farmland Mapping and Monitoring Program (2010)

FIGURE III.12-2
Important Farmland within the LUPA Decision Area

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III.12.2.3.2 Imperial Borrego Valley Ecoregion Subarea

The Imperial Borrego Valley ecoregion subarea contains Williamson Act lands as well as FMMP Important Farmland, as shown in Table III.12-5. This ecoregion subarea is primarily in Imperial County, but also includes a small portion of San Diego County. Of the 53 existing renewable energy projects listed in Appendix O, 11 are within Imperial and San Diego counties and 10 are on privately owned land. Among these, Ocotillo Express Wind Project (12,436 acres) is the only project within BLM-administered land and is also the only wind technology project. Two projects are operational geothermal projects: Hudson Ranch I (305 acres; 49.9 MW) and ORNI 18 (240 acres; 50 MW). The remaining 8 projects are Solar PV, 2 of which are in San Diego County. Several of the solar photovoltaic (PV) projects under construction within Imperial County are quite large. The Centinela Solar, Campo Verde, Mount Signal and Solar Gen 2 projects are 2,067 acres, 1,990 acres, 1,409 acres, and 1,500 acres, respectively, and upon completion will together generate 659 MW. The Imperial Solar Energy Center South is partially operational and will generate up to 130 MW.

**Table III.12-5
Acres of Williamson Act Lands and FMMP Farmland Within the
Imperial Borrego Valley Ecoregion Subarea of the DRECP Area***

Category	Acres
Prime Farmland	189,000
Farmland of Statewide Importance	307,000
Unique Farmland	2,000
Farmland of Local Importance	35,000
Other Land	532,000
Urban and Built-Up Land	31,000
Water	700
Not Mapped	1,314,000
Total	2,412,000
Williamson Act Land	50

* Not including Inyo County data; source California Department of Conservation data from 2010

Note: The following general rounding rules were applied to calculated values: values greater than 1,000 were rounded to the nearest 1,000; values less than 1,000 and greater than 100 were rounded to the nearest 100; values of 100 or less were rounded to the nearest 10, and therefore totals may not sum due to rounding. In cases where subtotals are provided, the subtotals and the totals are individually rounded. The totals are not a sum of the rounded subtotals; therefore, the subtotals may not sum to the total within the table.

III.12.2.3.3 Kingston and Funeral Mountains Ecoregion Subarea

The Kingston and Funeral mountains ecoregion subarea contains 2,470,404 acres of unmapped FMMP lands and no Williamson Act lands.

III.12.2.3.4 Mojave and Silurian Valley Ecoregion Subarea

The Mojave and Silurian Valley ecoregion subarea contains Williamson Act lands as well as FMMP Important Farmland, as shown in Table III.12-6. Of relevance to this ecoregion subarea are the existing projects listed in Appendix O for San Bernardino County. One renewable energy project, a solar power tower project within San Bernardino County, generates 390 MW on 3,471 acres and is within BLM-administered lands. The remaining 10 existing projects within San Bernardino County are either on privately owned land or within Twentynine Palms. There are 2 operational wind projects: Cemex Black Mountain Quarry (1.5 MW) and Cemex Victorville (1.6 MW). The other 8 projects are solar (both PV and solar trough). Three are operational and 5 are under construction.

**Table III.12-6
Acres of Williamson Act Lands and FMMP Farmland Within the
Mojave and Silurian Valley Ecoregion Subarea of the DRECP Area***

Category	Acres
Prime Farmland	2,000
Farmland of Statewide Importance	3,000
Unique Farmland	500
Grazing Land	25,000
Nonagricultural and Natural Vegetation	21,000
Other Land	116,000
Urban and Built-Up Land	4,000
Not Mapped	2,473,000
Vacant or Disturbed Land	1,000
Rural Residential	40
Total	2,644,000
Williamson Act Land	700

* Not including Inyo County data; source California Department of Conservation data from 2010

Note: The following general rounding rules were applied to calculated values: values greater than 1,000 were rounded to the nearest 1,000; values less than 1,000 and greater than 100 were rounded to the nearest 100; values of 100 or less were rounded to the nearest 10, and therefore totals may not sum due to rounding. In cases where subtotals are provided, the subtotals and the totals are individually rounded. The totals are not a sum of the rounded subtotals; therefore, the subtotals may not sum to the total within the table.

III.12.2.3.5 Owens River Valley Ecoregion Subarea

The Owens River Valley ecoregion subarea contains 417,558 acres of unmapped FMMP lands and no Williamson Act lands.

III.12.2.3.6 Panamint Death Valley Ecoregion Subarea

The Panamint Death Valley ecoregion subarea contains some FMMP Important Farmland but no Williamson Act lands, as identified in Table III.12-7.

**Table III.12-7
Acres of FMMP Farmland Within the Panamint
Death Valley Ecoregion Subarea of the DRECP Area***

Category	Acres
Nonagricultural and Natural Vegetation	81,000
Not Mapped	1,856,000
Rural Residential	80
Total	1,937,000

* Not including Inyo County data; source California Department of Conservation data from 2010

Note: The following general rounding rules were applied to calculated values: values greater than 1,000 were rounded to the nearest 1,000; values less than 1,000 and greater than 100 were rounded to the nearest 100; values of 100 or less were rounded to the nearest 10, and therefore totals may not sum due to rounding. In cases where subtotals are provided, the subtotals and the totals are individually rounded. The totals are not a sum of the rounded subtotals; therefore, the subtotals may not sum to the total within the table.

III.12.2.3.7 Pinto Lucerne Valley and Eastern Slopes Ecoregion Subarea

The Pinto Lucerne Valley and Eastern Slopes ecoregion subarea contains FMMP Important Farmland and Williamson Act lands, as shown in Table III.12-8.

**Table III.12-8
Acres of Williamson Act Lands and FMMP Farmland Within the
Pinto Lucerne Valley and Eastern Slopes Ecoregion Subarea of the DRECP Area***

Category	Acres
Prime Farmland	400
Farmland of Statewide Importance	1,000
Unique Farmland	90
Grazing Land	361,000
Other Land	26,000
Urban and Built-Up Land	19,000
Not Mapped	1,911,000
Total	2,319,000
Williamson Act Land	300

* Not including Inyo County data; source California Department of Conservation data from 2010

Note: The following general rounding rules were applied to calculated values: values greater than 1,000 were rounded to the nearest 1,000; values less than 1,000 and greater than 100 were rounded to the nearest 100; values of 100 or less were rounded to the nearest 10, and therefore totals may not sum due to rounding. In cases where subtotals are provided, the subtotals and the totals are individually rounded. The totals are not a sum of the rounded subtotals; therefore, the subtotals may not sum to the total within the table.

III.12.2.3.8 Piute Valley and Sacramento Mountains Ecoregion Subarea

The Piute Valley and Sacramento Mountains ecoregion subarea contains 1,092,891 acres of unmapped FMMP lands and no Williamson Act lands.

III.12.2.3.9 Providence and Bullion Mountains Ecoregion Subarea

The Providence and Bullion mountains ecoregion subarea contains FMMP Important Farmland but no Williamson Act lands, as identified in Table III.12-9.

**Table III.12-9
Acres of FMMP Farmland Within the Providence and
Bullion Mountains Ecoregion Subarea of the DRECP Area***

Category	Acres
Farmland of Statewide Importance	70
Grazing Land	100
Other Land	17,000
Prime Farmland	40
Not Mapped	2,598,000
Total	2,615,000

* Not including Inyo County data; source California Department of Conservation data from 2010

Note: The following general rounding rules were applied to calculated values: values greater than 1,000 were rounded to the nearest 1,000; values less than 1,000 and greater than 100 were rounded to the nearest 100; values of 100 or less were rounded to the nearest 10, and therefore totals may not sum due to rounding. In cases where subtotals are provided, the subtotals and the totals are individually rounded. The totals are not a sum of the rounded subtotals; therefore, the subtotals may not sum to the total within the table.

III.12.2.3.10 West Mojave and Eastern Slopes Ecoregion Subarea

The West Mojave and Eastern Slopes ecoregion subarea contains FMMP Important Farmland and Williamson Act lands, as shown in in Table III.12-10. Of particular relevance to this ecoregion subarea are the projects within Los Angeles and Kern counties. Only one project lies within BLM-administered lands, the 2,592-acre Alta East Wind Project in Kern County. There are 9 other wind projects, totaling 44,643 acres, that are either operational or under construction on both privately owned and public land in Kern County. Seven of these wind projects were operational as of October 15, 2013, including the 13,785-acre Alta Wind project, the 8,000-acre Pine Tree Wind Farm, the 8,300-acre Pacific Wind LLC project, and the 12,781-acre North Sky River Energy project.

Also within Kern County are 8 PV projects that are either operational or under construction. Most of these are relatively small in scale with the exception of the operational 1,223-acre Catalina Renewable Energy Project.

Ten PV technology projects are operational or under construction within Los Angeles County, totaling 4,450 acres and 372.4 MW within county boundaries. The 3,200-acre AVSP 1 project, partially within both Kern and Los Angeles counties, will generate a total of 579 MW when operational.

Table III.12-10
Acres of Williamson Act Lands and FMMP Farmland Within
the West Mojave and Eastern Slopes Ecoregion Subarea of the DRECP Area*

Category	Acres
Farmland of Local Importance	6,000
Farmland of Statewide Importance	4,000
Grazing Land	878,000
Prime Farmland	41,000
Unique Farmland	2,000
Nonagricultural and Natural Vegetation	1,178,000
Other Land	536,000
Semi-Agricultural and Rural Commercial Land	1,000
Urban and Built-Up Land	140,000
Water	800
Not Mapped	752,000
Vacant or Disturbed Land	70,000
Rural Residential	17,000
Total	3,626,000
Williamson Act Land	59,000

* Not including Inyo County data; source California Department of Conservation data from 2010a and 2010b

Note: The following general rounding rules were applied to calculated values: values greater than 1,000 were rounded to the nearest 1,000; values less than 1,000 and greater than 100 were rounded to the nearest 100; values of 100 or less were rounded to the nearest 10, and therefore totals may not sum due to rounding. In cases where subtotals are provided, the subtotals and the totals are individually rounded. The totals are not a sum of the rounded subtotals; therefore, the subtotals may not sum to the total within the table.

III.12.2.3.11 CDCA Lands Outside the DRECP Boundary

Table III.12-11 lists the Important Farmland outside the DRECP boundary.

Table III.12-11
Important Farmland Outside the DRECP Area

Agricultural Resource	Total Acres
Prime Farmland	10
Unique Farmland	50
Farmland of Local Importance	200
Grazing Land	80
Nonagricultural and Natural Vegetation	6,000
Other Land	103,000
Urban and Built-Up Land	100
Water	80
Not Mapped	948,000
Total	1,058,000

Note: The following general rounding rules were applied to calculated values: values greater than 1,000 were rounded to the nearest 1,000; values less than 1,000 and greater than 100 were rounded to the nearest 100; values of 100 or less were rounded to the nearest 10, and therefore totals may not sum due to rounding. In cases where subtotals are provided, the subtotals and the totals are individually rounded. The totals are not a sum of the rounded subtotals; therefore, the subtotals may not sum to the total within the table.

III.12.3 Agricultural Resources—Outside the DRECP Area

The transmission corridors outside of the DRECP area are in four geographic areas: San Diego, Los Angeles, North Palm Springs–Riverside, and the Central Valley. For agricultural resources, primary concerns are whether affected lands are under contract in the Williamson Act program, or whether the agricultural land has been identified as important under the California Department of Conservation’s Farmland Mapping and Monitoring Program (FMMP), and how these lands are affected.

III.12.3.1 Williamson Act Lands

The amount of Williamson Act land in transmission corridors outside the DRECP area varies greatly, depending on the area. Williamson Act land within a 3-mile-wide swath (1.5 miles on either side of a transmission line) along each corridor ranges from 0 acres in the Los Angeles area to over 300,000 acres in the Central Valley area. Typically, transmission towers have a relatively small footprint within an agricultural field or orchard, so there is a relatively small loss of agricultural land. Transmission lines do not require cancellation of Williamson Act contracts, and agricultural practices can continue in rights-of-way (ROW) that are not occupied by towers or access roads.

III.12.3.2 Important Farmlands

As described earlier in this chapter, agricultural land is rated by soil quality and irrigation status, among other variables. As with Williamson Act lands, the amount and categories of mapped farmland and their distribution vary widely by area. Urban areas such as Los Angeles have little farmland with either unique or statewide or local importance. In contrast, the Central Valley has tens of thousands of acres of farmland in these categories. The total amount of each category of farmland affected by a project can be calculated using GIS data available through the FMMP.

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